Department of State

ACTION COPY

TELEGRAM

827-A

SECRET

PAGE 01 SAIGON 02886 111308Z

41
ACTION SS 25

INFO SSO 00,NSCF 00,CCO 00,/025 W

O R 111142Z AUG 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4436
INFO CINCPAC

S E C R E T SAIGON 2886

EXDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. I SAW GENERAL THIEU THIS AFTERNOON TO DISCUSS THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN SITUATION AND THE VN ORGANIZATION FOR THE CAMPAIGN.

2. I REMARKED THAT THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAD STARTED OUT QUITE WELL AT THE BEGINNING AND I HAD IN PARTICULAR BEEN FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY HIS HANDLING OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE ON AUGUST 8. THE UNFORTUNATE EVENTS T QUNAG TRI AND DONG HA HAD, HOWEVER, AROUSED A GREAT DEAL OF CRITCAL COMMENT IN THE U.S. BND PAR-

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 2886 S E C R E T
TICULARLY IN THE PRESS. I OBSERVED THAT OUR REPORTS PF U.S. PRESS COMMENTS GENERALLY ON THE CAMPAIGN AD ELECTORAL SITUATIOV HAD BEEN QUITE BAD. I CONCLUDED THAT IT WAS EXTREMELY IMPORTAT BOTH FOR THE GVN AND FOR US THAT THE CAMPAIGN BE GOTTEN BACK XN THE TRACKS. RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, THE DEVELOPMENTS EARLIER THIS WEEK HAD HAD A VERY UNFORTUNATE EFFECT. I WENT ON TO SAY THAT I RECOGNIZED THAT THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATES WERE NOT ACTING AS
RESPONSIBLY AS THEY MIGHT, BUT THAT IS THE NORMAL ROLE OF THE OPPOSITITN.

SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Izenberg DATE 10/6/81
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☑ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

Department of State TELEGRAM

SECRET

PAGE 02 SAIGON 02886 T113082

3. I SUGGESTED THAT ULTIMATELY THE GOVERNMENT HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SEE THAT THE ELECTIONS ARE CARRIED OUT FAIRLY AND HONESTLY. THERE APPEARED TO BE A LACK OF CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CANDIDATES AND I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO APPOINT SOMEONE WITH SUFFICIENT AUTHORITY TO ACT ON PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE CANDIDATES AND TO SETTLE THEM PROMPTLY AND DECISIVELY. IT HAD OCCURRED TO ME THAT SOMEONE LIKE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN LUU VIEN, WHO WAS HIGHLY REGARDED AND WAS A CIVILIAN, MIGHT BE ABLE TO FILL THIS ROLE EFFECTIVELY AND THUS AVOID SOME OF THESE DIFFICULTIES

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 2886 S E C R E T
I ADDED THAT IN ORDER TO BE REALLY EFFECTIVE, SOMEONE WAS PERHAPS NEEDED AS AN OPERATOR BEHIND THE SCENES TO SEE THAT DECISIONS WERE PROMPTLY AND EFFICIENTLY IMPLEMENTED, BUT DIEM, WHO HAD THESE QUALIFICATIONS AND WAS ACCEPTED BY MANY DIFFERENT GROUPS, MIGHT BE ABLE TO FILL THIS ROLE.

4. THIEU POINTED OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE CAMPAIGN BUT NOT OTHERS. THE CENTRAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE HAS THE BASIC RESPONSIBILITY TO ORGANIZE THE CAMPAIGN AND THE SPECIAL COMMISSARIAT FOR ADMINISTRATION IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE A REPRESENTATIVE WHO MEETS WITHTHE COMMITTEE. THIEU SAID THAT IN PRACTICE THE COMMITTEE DID NOT WANT TO SEE REPRESENTATIVE AT THEIR MEETINGS AND HAD COMMUNICATED WITH HIM BY MESSAGES, WHICH HAD NOT HELPED IN MAKING EFFECTIVE ARRANGEMENTS. HE SAID THAT AT QUANG TRI AND DONG HA, THE GOVERNMENT HAD DONE MUCH MORE THAN WAS REQUIRED. THE PROVINCE CHIEF HAD MADE ELEABORATE PREPARATIONS FOR THE MEETING AND HAD PREPARED LUCH FOR ALL OF THE CANDIDATES. IF THE CANDIDATES HAD WAITED ANTHER 15 MINUTES, CARS WOULD

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 2886 S E C R E T
HAVE BEEN AT DONG HA TO BRING THEM TO QUANG TRI. THIEU SAID THE CANDIDATES HAD ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT OF BAD

SECRET

Department of State TELEGRAM

SECRET

PAGE 03 SAIGON 02886 111308Z

FAITH BUT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE: THE GOVERNMENT WAS ACTUALLY ONLY REQUIRED TO SUPPLY TRANSPORTATION FOR THE CANDIDATES! HE CONCLUDED THAT SCA ADMINISTRATOR THUOG HAS ADEQUATE AUTHORITY TO TELL PROVINCE CHIEFS TO DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY. THIEU SAID THAT HE AND KY HAD ASKED TUONG TO PREPARE A LETTER TO BE SENT TO THE CANDIDATES SETTING FORTH THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES AND ITS INTENTIONS IN FULFILLING THEM.

5. IN ORDER TO IMPRESS THIEU WITH THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM OF PUBLIC ATTITUDE IN THE U.S., I CITED TO HIM IN SOME DETAIL MANY OF THE CRITICAL COMMENTS IN THE U.S. PRESS DURING

THE PAST FEW DAYS. I TOLD HIM THAT AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION COULD CHANGE FUNDAMENTALLY IF THE ELECTIONS DIDN'T GO OFF WELL. THIEU SAID IN CONCLUSION THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO DO WHAT WAS NECESSARY AND WILL DO SO.

6. COMMENT: (1) RE STATE 18629, WE HAD BEEN CONSIDERING FOR SOME TIME WITHIN THE MISSION THE PROBLEM OF HVN

PAGE 5 TUMJIR 2886 S E C R E T
ORGANIZATION FOR THE ELECTIONS AND HAD DEVELOPED RECOMMENDATIOVT TO THE GVN REGARDING THE DESGNATION OF A CAPABLE AND REPUTABLE SENIOR OFFICIAL TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CAMPAIGN ARRANGEMENTS. WE HAD OF COURSE CONSIDERED GENERAL THANG, SINCE IN MANY WAYS HE SEEMED THE BEST QUALIFIED AND HE HAD PLAYED A USEFUL ROLE IN THE EARLIER ELECTIONS. IT WAS OUR CONCLUSION, HOWEVER, THAT THE FACT HE WAS ONE OF THE GENERALS IN THE TOP MILITARY LEADERSHIP, AND KNOWN TO BE CLOSE TO KY, WOULD MAKE HIS APPOINTMENT DIFFICULT FOR THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES TO ACCEPT, EVEN THOUGH MANY OF THEM NO DOUBT RESPECT HIM.(2) A SEIOND BUT ALSO IMPORTANT ACTOR WAS THE EFFECT SUCH AN APPOINTMENT WOULD HAVE ON HIS CRUCIAL ROLE IN REVOLUTIONALY DEVELOPMENT AFFAIRS. (2) NO SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS WERE IN THE END MADE TO THE GVN SINCE THERE HAD BEEN A NUMBER OF REASSURINH MOVES AND THE INITIAL COOPERATION BETWEEN T/ ; CENTRAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE AND SPECIAL COMMISSARIAT FOR ADMINISTRATION HAD BEEN EXCELLENT. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE QUANG TRI-DONG HA DIFFICULTIES, HOWEVER, THE MATTER WAS

SECRET

declassified

Department of State TELEGRAM

SECRET

PAGE 02 SAIGON 02886 111308Z

RECONSIDERED AND I DECIDED THAT I SHOULD TAKE THIS UP WITH THIEU AND KY AS INDICATED ABOVE. OUR THOUGHT WAS TO

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 2886 S E C R E T
SUGGEST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN LUU VIEN AS THE BEST PROSPECT WITH THE ADDED POSSIBILITY OF HAVING BUI DIEM BROUGHT BACK TO BE THE OPERATOR AND FOLLOW-UP MAN WORKING WITH HIM AND TRUONG THEIU WAS NON-COMMITAL ON THIS SUGGESTION. I AM SEEING KY LATER TODAY. BUNKER

SECRET